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Subsection A

Curriculum

FINDINGS

1. There is inadequate central review of curriculum changes to determine whether they advance the best interests of the University as a whole.

a. Curriculum changes include the following:

(1) Addition of new courses or whole clusters of courses involved in a new program of instruction. This includes determination of:

(a) Course titles and descriptions.

(b) Hour-credit value which courses will carry.

(c) Course numbers, which means the undergraduate level at which they will be taught.

(d) Frequency of offering courses and quarters when they will be offered.

(e) Time of meeting for courses.

(f) Prerequisites for courses.

(g) Extent to which courses shall be generally prescribed.

(2) Dropping existing courses or whole programs of instruction.

(3) Revision of the scope and content of courses and course descriptions.

b. The faculties of the schools and colleges of the University have a great deal of freedom in making curriculum changes.

(1) Under the University Statutes, there are only two limitations:

(a) The President must approve the change if it involves budgetary questions.

(b) The University Faculty has the right to alter or reverse any action of a school or college which, in its judgment, adversely affects the interests of the University as a whole or which

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seriously affects the interests of the faculty of another school or college.

(2) In practice, the University Faculty does not review curriculum changes.

(3) In practice, the President and Dean of Faculties do exercise some control over curriculum changes.

(a) The addition of new courses and other important changes normally involve budgetary questions, thus requiring Presidential approval.

(b) The President, in administering this control, acts only after recommendation by the Dean of Faculties.

(c) Major changes in curriculum usually are reviewed by the Dean of Faculties even though a budgetary question is not involved, and he sometimes disapproves of these changes.

(4) It should be noted, however, that, under the Statutes, each school and college faculty is free to make any changes which do not involve budgetary questions; for example, replace one course with an entirely different course, possibly one already being taught in another school or college.

c. The limited central administrative review of curriculum changes is not adequate to assure that all these changes advance the best interests of the University as a whole.

(1) It is asking a great deal to expect an administrative officer, acting alone, to pass judgments on proposed curriculum changes in each of the multitudinous subject-matter areas in a large university. One person can hardly have enough knowledge of all the subjects taught in a university to determine how changes in one subject-matter area will affect others throughout the institution.

(2) A representative faculty group could better determine the effects of proposed curriculum changes on other subject-matter areas of the University and whether these changes advanced the best interests of the institution as a whole.

2. There is real need for a thorough-going revision of at least some of the curricula of the University.

a. The curriculum of any educational institution is a perennial problem. Almost the easiest phase of a university to criticize is its curriculum. One can thumb through a college catalogue and find courses that he doubts should be taught. It is easy to spot what appear to be unnecessary duplications and proliferation of specialized courses. It should be remembered, however, that variety and scope of course offerings are part of what makes a university great. It should be remembered, too, that economy is not the sole aim, or necessarily even the prime aim, of curriculum revision. What is more important is the improvement of quality of instruction. Revision may mean the addition of courses where offerings are limited.

b. Some schools and colleges at the University have made thorough and intensive studies of their curricula. The great difficulty of a study limited to a particular school or college is that the University-wide point of view is missing.

c. There appears to have been no overall study of the curricula of the University as a whole in recent times.

d. Time and resources were not available in this Study to make a careful analysis of the curricula of the University. The Study has uncovered, however, widespread evidences of need for considerable curriculum revision. Most of what is said below could be said with equal force for the great majority of universities in the country.

(1) Consultants frequently commented on curriculum inflation in terms of the number of courses offered and the credit-hour value of

courses. A number of the consultants suggested consolidations of courses. Reductions of credit-hour values of courses was frequently recommended - for example, from five hours to three hours. It was also suggested that some courses for which 5 credit hours are given might meet less than 5 periods per week.

(2) There seemed to be a considerable amount of duplication, or near-duplication of courses, particularly between the professional schools and colleges and the College of Arts and Sciences.

(3) Questions were raised in at least a few instances as to whether particular courses should be taught in a university, or, if taught, whether college credit should be given for them.

(4) Consultants and some alumni groups felt that certain courses needed revision in the light of current developments in the professional or technical fields with which the courses were concerned.

(5) Course offerings seem to be inadequate in some areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. That the University establish a Curriculum Council.

A. This Council should be composed of not more than nine faculty members, broadly representative of the University as a whole, with the Dean of Faculties as ex officio chairman.

B. This Council should be appointed by the President from a panel of nominees elected by the University Faculty (or the University Council, if created). The panel of nominees should consist of twice the number of positions to be filled. Council members should have three-year terms, staggered so that normally not more than one-third of the positions would be vacated in any one year. Provisions should be made for filling interim vacancies.

C. The Council should perform the following functions:

1. Continually study curricula of the University to achieve better coordination of instruction, to improve the quality of instruction, and to effect economies in instructional costs. Limited funds should be allocated to this Council each year for the conduct of its studies.

2. Draft a manual of suggested criteria to be considered in constructing a new curriculum, making curriculum changes, and analyzing an existing curriculum. This manual would be used by the Council and by the schools and colleges. It should be continually revised on the basis of experience and new developments.

3. Review all proposed changes in curriculum and make determinations or recommendations on changes.

a. Any curriculum change proposed by the faculty of a school or college should be submitted to the Curriculum Council. This would include not simply the addition or revision of courses but all changes, including those listed in FINDINGS 1. a. above.

b. The Council should make a careful study of the proposed change as to its effects on and relationships with other curricula of the University.

c. The Council should make final decisions on changes which do not involve budgetary questions.

d. The Council should make recommendations to the President on each proposed change that involves budgetary questions.

D. Administrative officers should do everything possible to elevate the prestige of service on this Council. At other institutions in the country service on a University-wide curriculum council of this sort is regarded as one of the highest honors for faculty members. What is needed on such

a Council is a statesmanlike attitude, a real effort to think and act in terms of the interests of the institution as a whole. It is important that this Council be more than a mere veto body on proposed curriculum changes. Its positive functions of study and coordination should be emphasized.

E. Implementation of this recommendation will require revision of the University Statutes.

II. That the University undertake immediately a thorough and comprehensive study of its curricula.

A. If the Curriculum Council is created, this initial study should be conducted by this body, but the study should be made in any event. Continuing follow-up studies would be the normal function of the Curriculum Council, as stated above.

B. This should be a unified study of all the curricula of the University considered as a whole.

C. Funds should be made available for this initial study, to include outside consultative and technical services. It is probable that such a study will take considerable time, possibly several years.

III. That each of the larger schools and colleges establish a Curriculum Council similar to the one for the University as a whole.